



Factors affecting change over time in college students' civic attitudes, knowledge and skills

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Summary

The present study grew out of a new initiative undertaken at Tulane University in 2006. Following Hurricane Katrina, the university instituted a two-tiered public service graduation requirement for all undergraduate students, as one aspect of its increased involvement with the New Orleans community. Students are required to take at least one service-learning course during their first two years of study and to complete a second community-based learning experience (service-learning course, public service internship, research project, etc.) before graduation. To assure that each student would receive

a high quality service-learning experience, special efforts were begun in 2006 by the newly created Center for Public Service to develop faculty and community partner expertise and to provide support for student work at the agencies.

When our research began in the fall of 2006, we were interested in students' reactions to the new requirement; we planned to make this a longitudinal study, so that we could learn about how their views changed or remained the same as they progressed through their university studies. Our previous research has shown incoming students in academic years 2006-2008 to be positive about the public service graduation requirement (Moely & Ilustre, 2011), especially so if they had participated in service prior to college entry. Today's report concerns the second phase of this longitudinal study, with data gathered after students had been at the university for two years.

In this longitudinal study, college students showed stability over two years in civic attitudes, knowledge, and skills. They increased in valuing community service and in measures of civic knowledge. Interests at college entry were important predictors of later civic attitudes, as were reports of service-learning course quality.

References

Moely, B. E., & Ilustre, V. (2011). University students' views of a public service graduation requirement. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 17(2), 43-58.